

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

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SS-15 USIA-15 AID-05 /098 W

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R 161925Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2556

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 ASUNCION 1086

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, SHUM, PA, IDB, IBRD

SUBJ: ASUNCION PRESS BLASTS US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

SUMMARY: ASUNCION IS BEING TREATED TO A PRESS CAMPAIGN VILIFYING THE US AND THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION FOR ITS HUMAN RIGHTS STAND. NOT ONLY THE GOVERNMENT ORGAN Z"PATRIA", BUT THE INDEPENDENT DAILIES HAVE JOINED IN THE CRITICISM. THIS IS A DEPARTURE FROM THE "MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER" USUAL PRESS REACTION TO US HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES, AND SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SET OFF BY THE US DECISIONS TO VETO A PENDING IDB SOFT LOAN FOR THE CHACO ROAD COST OVERRUN IF PRESENTED, AND TO VOTE AGAINST AN IBRD HIGHWAY LOAN. THERE IS EVIDENCE THE CAMPAIGN WAS GENERATED BY THE NEW INFORMATION DIRECTOR IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE. THE OVERALL RESULT MAY BE OPPOSITE TO THAT INTENDED. THE PARAGUAYAN PRES IS DOING AN EXCELENT JOB OF SPOTLIGHTING THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. END SUMMARY.

1. WHAT UNTIL RECENTLY WAS LOW KEYED COVERAGE OF US HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES IN PARAGUAY HAS IN THE LAST THREE WEEKS
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BECOME AN AVALANCHE OF ATTACKS AGAINST US POLICY AS NAIVE AND AN INTRUSION IN PARAGUAY'S SOVEREIGN AFFAIRS. THE OSTENSIBLY INDEPENDENT DAILY "HOY", RECENTLY TAKEN OVER BY PRESIDENT STROESSNER'S SON-IN-LAW, HUMBERTO DOMINGUEZ DIBB, PRESAGED THE FIGHT IN A FEBRUARY 16 NEWS ITEM CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT'S ARA CHIEF OF MISSION MEETING IN WASHINGTON. IT SAID THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY HAD STARTED A FIGHT

BETWEEN STATE DEPARTMENT PROFESSIONALS AND CARTER POLITICAL APPOINTEES, THE FORMER ADVISING MODERATION WITH THE LATTER TAKING A HARD LINE OF PUBLIC DENUNCIATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CARRYING OUT THAT POLICY.

2. THE PAPERS, WHICH ALSO INCLUDE ASUNCION'S "ABC", EVENING DAILY "ULTIMA HORA", AND RULING PARTY ORGANS "EL COLORADO" AND "PATRIA" HAVE WOVEN HUMAN RIGHTS THEMES AROUND THE FOLLOWING THREE RECENT NEWS OCCURRENCES: A) ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S SPEECH TO THE NEW YORK LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS INSTITUTE OF FEBRUARY 14. THIS WAS PLAYED AS A BREACH WITH THE PREVIOUS HARD LINERS' HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH TO THE HEMISPHERE; B) THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK'S (IDB) NON-APPROVAL OF PARAGUAYAN SOFT LOANS DUE TO US INFLUENCE IN THAT INSTITUTION; C) THE NEGATIVE VOTE OF THE US IN THE WORLD BANK (IBRD) WHICH, THOUGH UNSUCCESSFUL IN STOPPING A \$33 MILLION LOAN, WAS TAKEN AS LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE STROESSNER REGIME; D) THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES' IAHRC REPORTS CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN URUGUAY AND PARAGUAY. ALL HAVE EMPHASIZED THE THEME OF US INTERVENTION IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF PARAGUAY VIA UNILATERALLY FORMULATED HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES WHICH INCLUDE ECONOMIC COERCION THROUGH INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS.

3. NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THIS TOPIC, WHICH HERETOFORE HAS NORMALLY TAKEN THE FORM OF REPRINTS FROM THE WIRE SERVICES UNCLASSIFIED

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(AP, UPI, LATIN) WITHOUT EDITORIALIZING, HAS CHANGED TO FRONT PAGE COMMENTARIES AND EDITORIAL COLUMNS INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF US POLIC. THE MAIN THEMES HAVE BEEN INSENSITIVITY TO AND LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF PARAGUAYAN (AND LATIN AMERICAN) HISTORY, INTERVENTIONISM IN THE WORST TRADITIONS OF THE "BIG STICK" DAYS, ECONOMIC COERCION EXTENDED TO THE HITHERTO SACROSANCT INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS, THUS COMPROMISING THEIR USEFULNESS, AND UNILATERAL FOREIGN POLICIES DISCONSONANT WITH INTERNATIONAL REALITIES, PARTICULARLY, MUCH MISUNDERSTOOD LATIN AMERICA. "HOY" EDITORIALS BEGINNING MARCH 11 LAUNCHED INTO A LOOSELY STRUNG LITANY OF FAMILIAR THIRD WORLD AND (PARADOXICALLY) MARXIST RHETORIC POINTING OUT THE US ARROGANCE IN FOSTERING HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH THE US ITSELF DOES NOT OBSERVE DOMESTICALLY. "HOY" HAS CITED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION; CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT A-LA-WATERGATE; FREE USE OF BRIBES BY AMERICAN COMPANIES OVERSEAS; THE INEQUALITY OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM (PATTY HEARST AND CHAPPAQUIDICK); BIG BOSSISM VIA CARTER'S INVOKING OF THE TAFT HARTLEY LAW; WASTEFUL EXPLOITATION OF THIRD WORLD RESOURCES; AND UNCLE SAM'S DISRESPECT FOR INNOCENT CIVILIANS BY DROPPING THE A BOMB ON HIROSHIMA. THE HEAVY-HANDED INTENT SEEMS TO BE TO DISCREDIT THE US'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY BY DEMONSTRATING THAT IT

IS SELF-RIGHTEOUS PREACHING OF PRINCIPLES THE US ITSELF DOES NOT
OBSERVE.

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4. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT THE NEW INFORMATION DIRECTOR
OF THE PRESIDENCY/ANIBAL FERNANDEZ, GENERATED THE ATTACKS
FOLLOWING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE IDB SOFT LOANS. THE
SUPPOSITION IS THAT WHEREAS MOST PAPERS ACCEPTED AS
REASONABLE SUGGESTIONS THAT THEY CRITICIZE
THE US EDITORIALY FOR USING HUMAN RIGHTS IN THIS MANNER,
"HOY", UNDER DOMINGUEZ' DIRECTION, DECIDED TO MOUNT AN ALL-
OUT ATTACK. INFORMED SOURCES SPECULATE THAT THIS WAS DONE FOR
PERSONAL REASONS: DOMINGUEZ' ESTRANGEMENT FROM HIS WIFE,
THE PRESIDENT'S ONLY DAUGHTER, HAS PUT HIM IN OFFICIAL DISFAVOR.
THIS THEORY IS MADE MORE CREDIBLE IF "HOY'S" EDITORIALS ARE
COMPARED TO THE COMPARATIVELY MILD LINE TAKEN BY LEADING "ABC"
AND COLORADO PARTY'S "PATRIA". WHETHER THIS PRESS CAMPAIGN WILL
CONTINUE MUCH LONGER IS OPEN TO DOUBT. THE LAST TWO EDITORIALS
IN "HOY" HAVE ADDED A NEW FORMAT: THE EDITORIAL LAMBAST
ACCOMPANIED BY A FOREIGN PRESS REPRINT CRITICAL OF SOME CARTER
HUMAN RIGHTS THEME. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SOME INSIDERS
OF THE REGIME ARE BECOMING EMBARRASSED BY THE CAMPAGIN, AND
THAT THEY MAY REALIZE THAT THE OVERKILL IS HAVING THE OPPOSITE
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EFFECT: KEEPING ALIVE IN EVERYONE'S MIND THAT FACT THAT PARAGUAY
IS IN TROUBLE WITH THE US BECAUSE OF ITS POOR HUMAN RIGHTS
PERFORMANCE.
WHITE

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Message Attributes

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